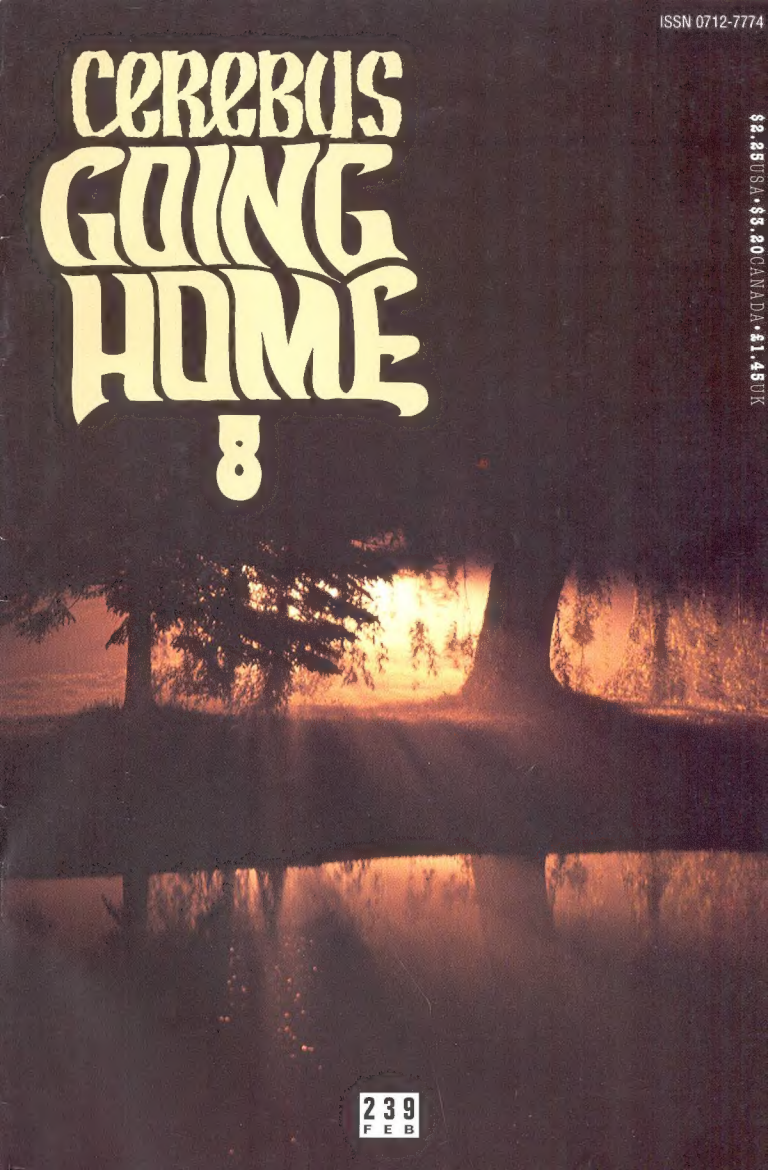
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS GOING HOME 8

$2.25USA•$3.20CANADA•£1.45UK



239 FEB

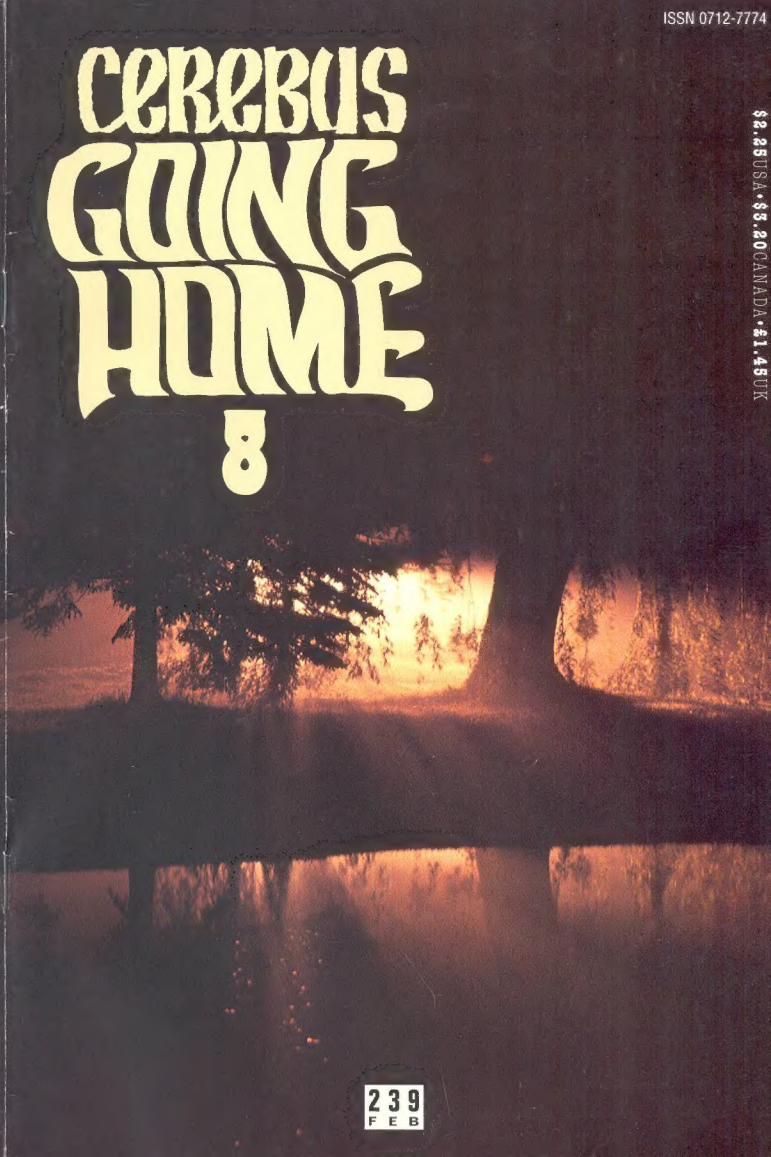
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

GOING HOME

8

$2.25USA $3.20CANADA £1.45UK



239
FEB

CEREBUS NO. 1

Wizard magazine's Tom Root did a nice little write-up on *Cerebus* on the back page of issue 89 (January 1999). I mean, I'm not crazy about Cerebus being described as "The Energizer Bunny of the small press," but hey.

I'm mentioning it here because Tom had to leave some things out, owing to space constraints I'm sure, and the one I was hoping they would've run was that I drew a substantial part of *Cerebus'* first issue up at Gene Day's place in Gananoque.

It's just one of those things about interviews. If you know what they're driving at, it's pretty easy to tailor your answers to the intended article. Tom threw me for a loop when he phoned and asked, "What do you remember about *Cerebus* No. 1?" Because, I have to admit, the first thing that comes to mind about *Cerebus* No. 1 was the industrial-sized garbage bin in Gene's studio and how we filled it up with used Kleenex and (eventually) used toilet paper over the course of a few days. In his article, Tom describes it as a "torturous bout of the flu." I even called it "the flu" in the interview. Is it just because I'm old that "the flu" doesn't mean what it used to? It's okay, you can tell me. I mean, when I was a kid, "the flu" meant (specifically) puking, you know, throwing up. Headache, sore joints, chills, runny nose — that was a cold. If you wanted to justify feeling sorry for yourself, a bad cold or a really bad cold.

Anyway, that was what Gene and I both had. And it wasn't so much torturous as it was… what's the term I'm looking for?… comedically gross? Sitting back to back about five feet apart at our two drawing boards and every five seconds: HOOOONNNNKKKK. Wipe, wipe. Plop. Sniff, snuffle, snuff. And then it was the other guy's turn. Gale (Gene's wife. Hi, Gale.) must've thought there was a flock of Canada geese on the second floor.

HOOONKKK. HONNNKKK.

Gene was working on his "Days of Future Past" story. I remember that. Came out from Star*Reach, I believe, either in *Star*Reach* or *Imagine*! Looked real good on the glossy paper *Epic* magazine used when Archie Goodwin ran the art folio tribute to Gene as an obituary. Shit. Now Archie's dead, too.

Should've stopped on the punch line, folks.

HOOOONNNKKK. HOOOONNNKKK.

Anyway, this is the last one of these for the foreseeable future. Good one to end on, eh? I think so. See "Aardvark Comment" for more on the changing face of *Cerebus* the monthly comic.

CEREBUS

NO. 239 FEBRUARY 1999

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer, Characters/ pencil & ink, lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist/pencil & ink, mechanical tones cover photo

CAROL WEST
Administrative Assistant

DIANA SCHUTZ
Proofreading

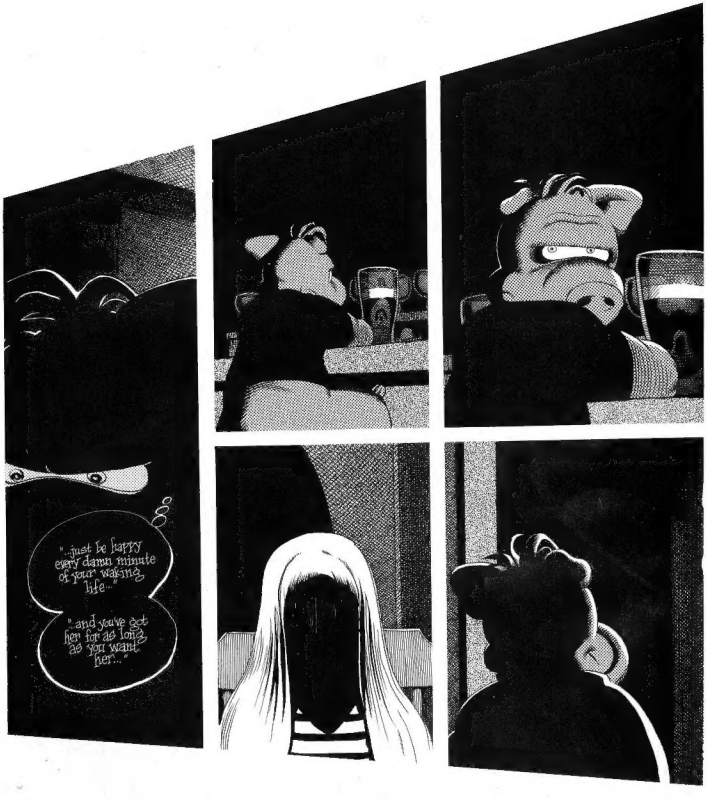
GOING HOME

(Cerebus 232 to Cerebus 265)

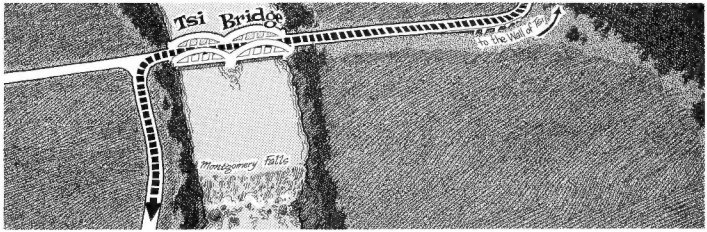
PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674, STATION C KITCHENER, ON N2G 4R2

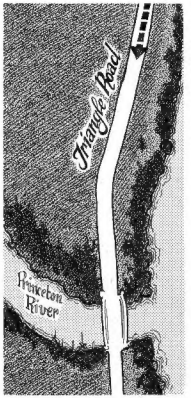
ALL CONTENTS ©1999 DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

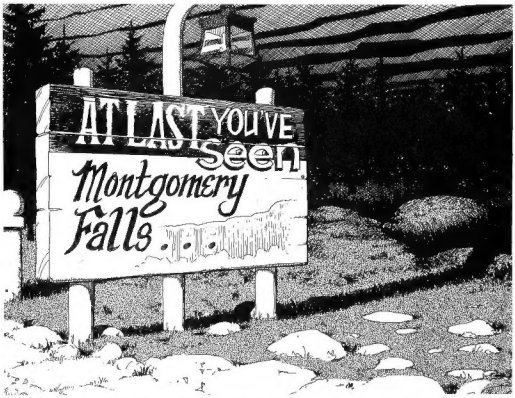
PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC. WINDSOR, ONTARIO

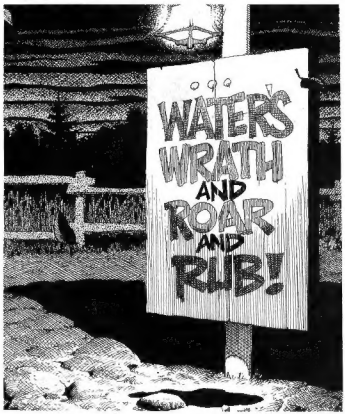

"...just be happy every damn minute of your waking life..."
"...and you've got her for as long as you want her..."

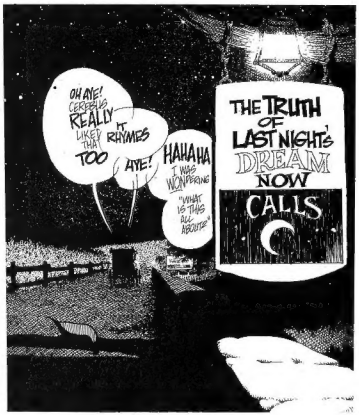
BOO!
Oh, Goofo...
WHAT A MESS, HUH?
MMM! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT...
OH, BUT I DRAGGED YOU ALL THE WAY OUT HERE AND GREG WASN'T EVEN
JAKA
JAKA
JAKA
WE'LL BE ON THE BOAT IN A COUPLE OF DAYS - WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HOW FAR WE GET EACH DAY ANYMORE
"KAY?
"KAY.
MWAH!
MWAH!
YOUR ROOM IS READY.
THAANK YOU
HA HA HAHA HAHA HAHA
?
WHAT DID YOU CALL CERBERUS?
WHEN?
JUST NOW WHEN CERBERUS SAID "BOO"
I SAID "WHAT A MESS, HUH?"
NOT BEFORE THAT.
BEFORE THAT, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING
?

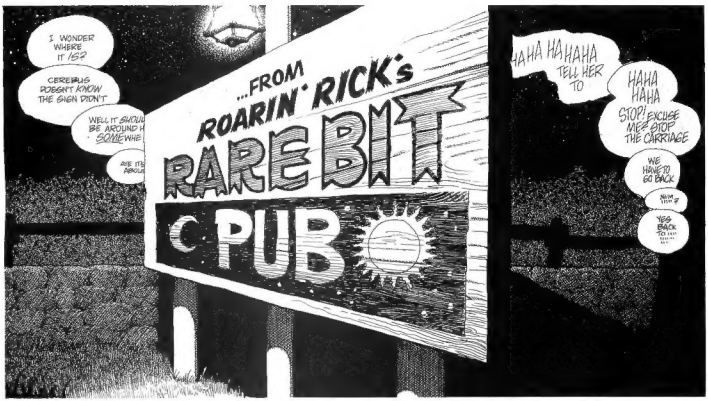

Tsi Bridge
to the Visit of Tsi
Montgomery Falls


Friary's Road
Princeton River


AT LAST YOU'VE seen
Montgomery Falls . . .

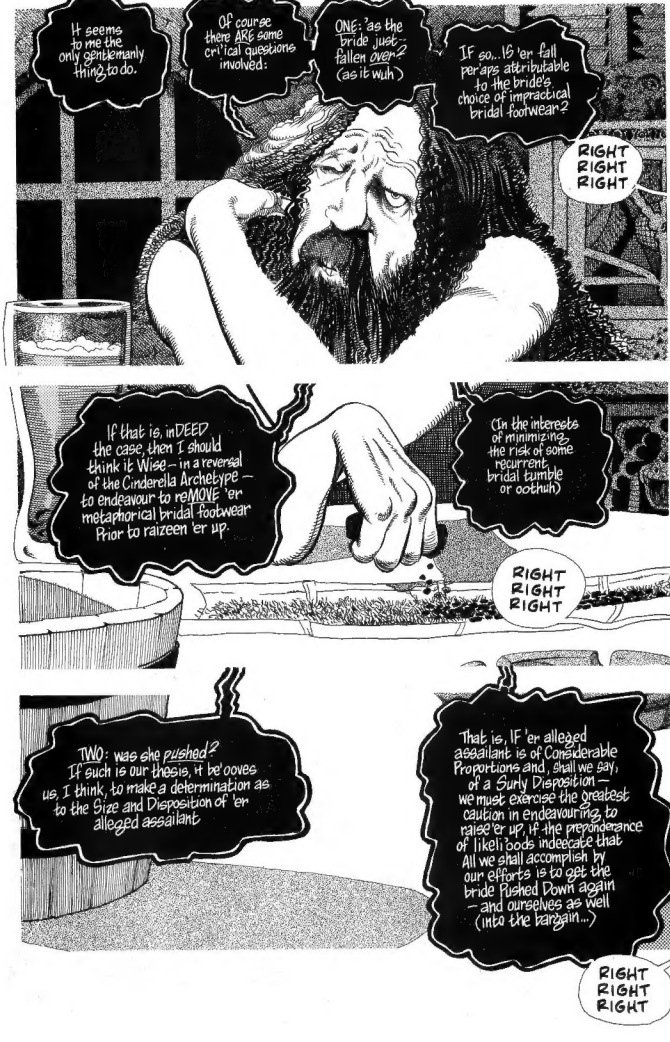

WATER'S WRATH AND ROAR AND RUB!

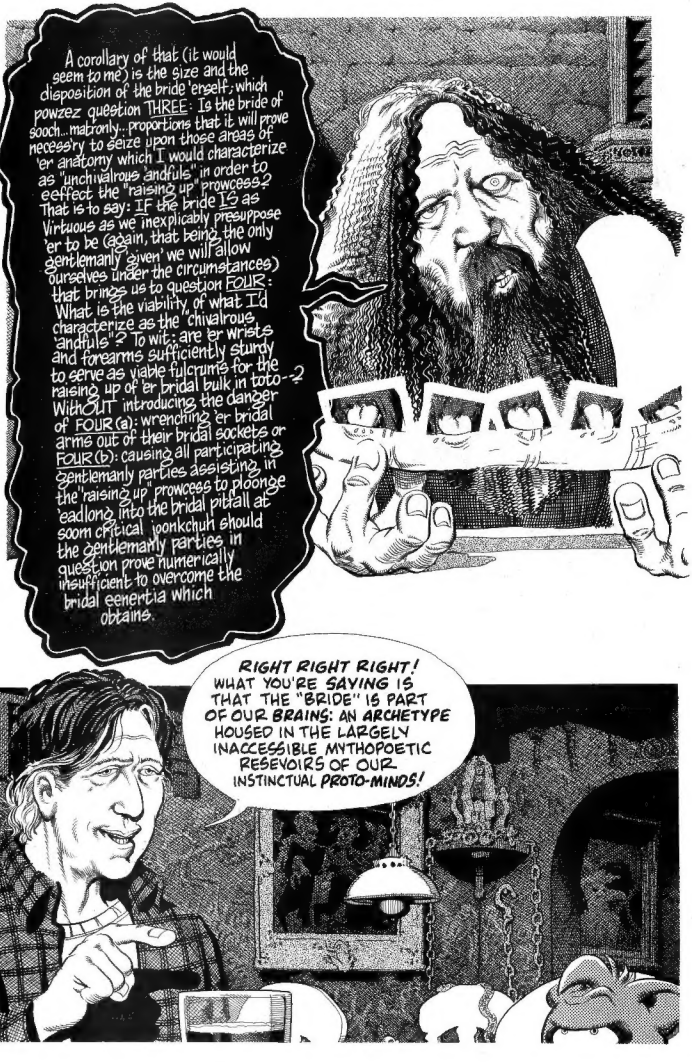

OH AYE! CERTESLY REALLY LIKEY THA TOO
AYE! IT RHYMES
HAHAHA I WAS WONTRONG
"WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?"
THE TRUTH OF LAST NIGHT'S DREAM NOW CALLS


I WONDER WHERE IT IS?
CERBERUS DOBBERT KNOW THE SIGN DON'T
...FROM ROARIN' RICK's RARE BIT
PUB
HAHA HAHA HAHA HAHA
TELL HER TO
STOP! EXCUSE ME? STOP THE CARRIAGE
WE HAVE TO GO BACK

HAHA HAHA
YOU JUST PASSED IT

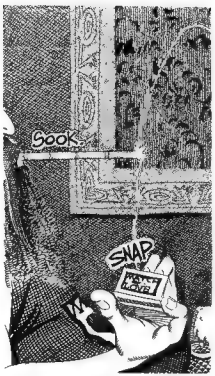
AND THEN I FOUND MYSELF IN THIS BEAUTIFUL MEADOW -- AND AT THE BOTTOM OF A NEARBY HILL --
THERE WAS THIS BEAUTIFUL WOMAN DRESSED AS A BRIDE
AND SHE STRETCHED HER ARMS OUT TO ME
"Raising Up the Bride."
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT
Now as I see it...

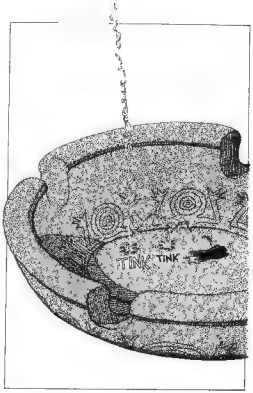

It seems to me the only gentlemanly thing to do.
Of course there ARE some cri'tical questions involved:
ONE: 'as the bride just fallen over?
(as it wuh)
IF so..IS 'er fall perAps attributable to the bride's choice of impractical bridal footwear?
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT
If that is, inDEED the case, then I should think it Wise — in a reversal of the Cinderella Archetype — to endeavour to reMOVE 'er metaphorical bridal footwear Prior to raizeen 'er up.
(In the interests of minimizing the risk of some recurrent bridal tumble or oothuh)
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT
TWO: was she pushed?
If such is our thesis, it be'ooves us, I think, to make a determination as to the Size and Disposition of 'er alleged assailant
That is, IF 'er alleged assailant is of Considerable Proportions and, shall we say, of a Surly Disposition — we must exercise the greatest caution in endeavouring to raise 'er up, if the preponderance of likeli'hoods indeecate that All we shall accomplish by our efforts is to get the bride Pushed Down again — and ourselves as well (into the bargain...)
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT

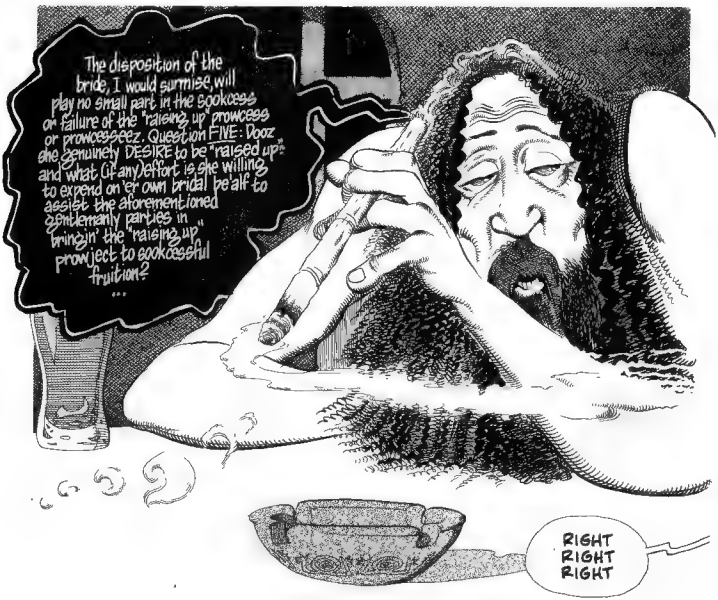

A corollary of that (it would seem to me) is the size and the disposition of the bride 'erself, which powzez question THREE: Is the bride of sooch...mabronly...proportions that it will prove necess'ry to seize upon those areas of 'er anatomy which I would characterize as "unchivalrous 'andfuls" in order to effect the "raising up" prowcess? That is to say: IF the bride IS as Virtuous as we inexplicably presuppose 'er to be (again, that being the only gentlemanly 'given' we will allow ourselves under the circumstances) that brings us to question FOUR: What is the viability, of what I'd characterize as the 'chivalrous 'andfuls'? To wit: are 'er wrists and forearms sufficiently sturdy to serve as viable fulcrums for the raising up of 'er bridal bulk in toto--? WithOUT introducing the danger of FOUR (a): wrenching 'er bridal arms out of their bridal sockets or FOUR (b): causing all participating gentlemanly parties assisting in the 'raising up' prowcess to ploonge 'eadlong into the bridal pitfall at soom critical joonkchuh should the gentlemanly parties in question prove numerically insufficient to overcome the bridal eenertia which obtains.
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT! WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT THE "BRIDE" IS PART OF OUR BRAINS: AN ARCHETYPE HOUSED IN THE LARGELY INACCESSIBLE MYTHOPOETIC RESEVOIRS OF OUR INSTINCTUAL PROTO-MINDS!

MOOK
Oy could very well be saying that, yes.
Where wooz I?
ah.

MATCH
LOVE


SOOK
SNAP
MATCH
LOVE


TINK


The disposition of the bride, I would surmise, will play no small part in the sookcess or failure of the "raising up" prowcess or prowcessecz. Question FIVE: Dooz she genuinely DESIRE to be "raised up" and what (if any) effort is she willing to expend on 'er own bridal be'alf to assist the aforementioned gentlemanly parties in bringin' the "raising up" prowject to sookcessful fruition?
...
RIGHT
RIGHT
RIGHT

Which dovetails nicely with question SIX: dooz she 'ave in 'er possession metaphorical pulleys, levers, ropes, chains and related archetypal devices which might serve to maximize the kinetic "raising up" energies being brought to bear upon 'er aforementioned bridal bulk along lines analagous to the universal laws of motion as they apply in the physical world?
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT! WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT THE "BRIDE" IS A UNIVERSAL SYMBOL OF THE DICHOTOMOUS UNDERPINNINGS OF CONVENTIONAL REALITY AS WE PERCEIVE IT! AND ENACTING A "RAISING UP" RITUAL IS A WAY TO ASSIST US IN OVERCOMING OUR CONVENTIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY!
I would not rule it out that that 'as SOOMthing to do with what I'm saying: No.

Question SEVEN: It is incumbent upon us, I should think, to inquire, "What is the specific EIGHT to which the bride desires 'enself to be raised?" If, in fact, she wishes to be raised ABOOV a specific masculine level (and I think it only gentlemanly to presuppose that she dooz), it seems to me that we moost prepare for sooch an evenchoality by forming a gentlemanly 'uman pyramid with all interested gentlemanly parties standing upon woom smoothahs shoulders (with all requirements of dispatch and decorum taken into account) in order to facillitate passing the bride oopward froom 'and to 'and oontill she 'as achieved 'er desired point oov bridal elevation.
K-f-
K-f-
Further, it seems not unreesonalvle to suppose that the said gentlemanly 'uman pyramid might need to be as mooch as 3 MILE in 'eight as ICKY measured froom gentlemanly 'uman pyramid BASE to gentlemanly 'uman pyramid ICKY APEX
GULP.
GULP.
taking it as a given that it is desirable to 'ave more than a sufficient noombah of gentlemanly bridal footstools and NOT require them ICKY than to find oonselves with an unsofficient noombah of bridal footstools at the critical joonkchuh to which I 'ave alluded previously

Oh!
THANK YOU.
NO
Riverside Road
Millowesh Road
Moresh
Teldi River
RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT! SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT ENACTING THE METAPHOR--HAVING A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF MEN PARTICIPATING IN "RAISING UP" THE ARCHETYPAL "BRIDE"--WILL PRODUCE THE SAME EFFECT IN THE REAL WORLD! RAISING UP ALL REAL BRIDES ABOVE ALL REAL MEN!

Well bugger me senseless if that isn't EXACTly wot I'm saying!
HURH
HURH HURH HURH
HAHAHA HAHA HAHA HA
HA HAHAH HAHAH
HAHA HAHA

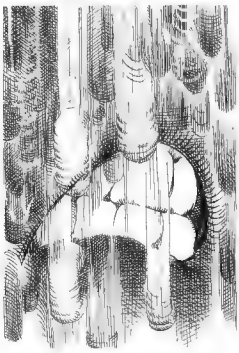
Heh.
WHEN CERBERUS WAS MARRIED
I JUST FIND THE WHOLE SUBJECT SO FASCINATING. "RAISING UP THE BRIDE . DREAMS, THE MOON..
JUST.. NATURE! IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT ALL FITS TOGETHER SOMEHOW AND THAT IT'S SILLY TO BELIEVE IN ANYTHING EDGE AND-OF COURSE ONCE A MONTH..
HAHA HAHAHA
HURH HURH HURH
HAHAHAHAHA
ONCE A MONTH IT'S ALMOST AS IF I CAN SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE
JAKA! WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!

PLEAGE DON'T INTERRUPT WHEN I'M TALKING
IT'S VERY RUDE
WHERE WAS I?
OH! I CAN'T HELP BUT AGREE WITH YOU- ABOUT "RAISING UP THE DEAD", I MEAN
I SUPPOSE IT DEPENDS ON HOW MANY GENTLEMANLY VOLUNTEERS WE CAN FIND
IF WE COULD MAKE A LIST OF NAMES TO START
JAKAL!
CEREBUS!

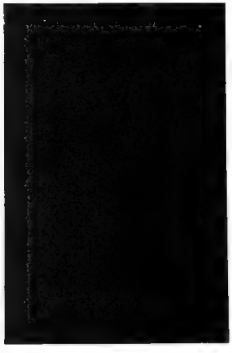
Jaka!

Cerebus.

JAK



CEREBUS!



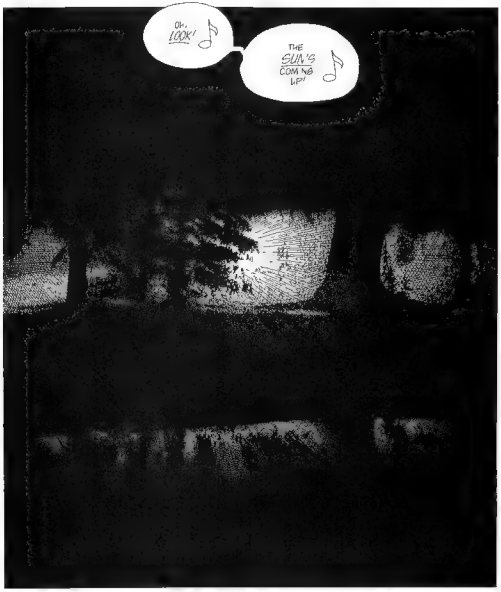
♪CEREBUS?

WAKE UP, HON ♪
YOU'RE HAVING A BAD DREAM

YOU OKAY?
UH?!
OH.
AYE.
HOW LONG HAS CERESUS BEEN ASLEEP?
OH. YOU DROPPED RIGHT OFF AS SOON AS WE LEFT MONTGOMERY FALLS
SO AT LEAST ONE OF US GOT SOME SLEEP TONIGHT

SNORRR
HAHAHA
HEY! YOU SNORE TOO!
I DO NOT
YOU DO SOO
IT DOESN'T MATTER
I WOULD'VE SPENT TWO NIGHTS WITHOUT SLEEP IN ONE OF THESE CARRIAGES..
JUST TO BE DONE WITH THEM FOR A WHILE
MY BUTT IS SO SORE.
CERBERUS COULD MASSAGE IT FOR YOU
HAHAHAHA
WELL, THANK YOU, KINDSIR
I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT OFFER AS SOON AS WE'RE IN OUR STATEROOM ON THE BOAT

AYE -
THE BOAT
WELL -
THERE'S THE DOCKS...
RIGHT OVER THERE
WE MADE IT, HON..
WE'RE REALLY HERE
OH!


OH, LOOK!
THE SUN'S COMING UP!

AARDVARK COMMENT

Okay, good news for some of you and bad news for others: this will be IT for Aardvark Comment until at least February or March of 2000 – and probably beyond that point. (Awww, Boo, some of you say.) (Yippee, Yahoo, others of you — and I count myself with this latter group — interject.) What will replace it is a pretty extended series of Notes on the evolution and thinkng behind Book Two of Going Home: *"Fall and the River." I enjoyed answering all your letters for a while and really hoped I could get completely caught up before the big "switcheroo" in issue 240. Alas, as my long-suffering readership is only too aware, I got bogged down in answering a handful of letters... um... thoroughly. ("Thorough" is the new term of high irony around the studio over the last while – when I take two or three days to rework a letters column answer, or do twelve panels on a page when three would do pretty much the same job of communication, or Gerhard finds some newer and more complicated way to do the backgrounds in those twelve-panels-that-could-have-been-three. I said to Ger a while ago, "You know. The* nice *word for what we are is 'thorough.'" Starting with "anal retentive," there's certainly no shortage of "not nice" terms for what we are.)*

Anyway, you can take my word for it that I still read all of the letters that come in addressed to Dave Sim or Aardvark Comment — no matter how long they are. I say that because most of the ten- and twelve-page letters will mention at some point, "Well, I'm sure you stopped reading all this several pages ago." Not true. All part of being... thorough... I guess. I still set aside a day each month to answer the mail – not all of it, but what I do answer, I try to answer... thoroughly.

Anyway, this intro is getting a little too... thorough... so, let's get down to the Last Aardvark Comment of the 1900s, shall we?

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Dear Dave,

I was down at Multi-Book's Toronto warehouse last week doing some shopping for the comics shop that I work at when I stumbled across a stash of old *Comics Journals* in a 15-cent box. Here's a quote from issue #98 (May 1985) related to the "new" A-V, after you split with Deni: "Since the Cerebus-related titles were the backbone of Aardvark-Vanaheim, one is tempted to suggest that the 'new' A-V will be leaner and more solid; on the practical side, though, we have to remember that the company is now solely in the hands of an artist/writer, a situation akin to putting Ed "Big Daddy" Roth in charge of production at General Motors. Aardvark-Vanaheim is definitely on shaky ground."

Dave, I laughed and laughed.

Congratulations on getting to the three-quarters mark. It just dawned on me that I've been reading *Cerebus* since the 112/113 double issue, just over half the actual numbers to date.

Anyway, here's a copy of my newest publication. Hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

Steve Gilbert
c/o King Ink
262 Paterson St.
Newmarket, ON L3Y 3L8

P.S. If Big Daddy Roth were running GM, it might give me a reason to go out and buy a car, come to think of it…uh, is Roth even still alive?

P.P.S. I know, the article by Jan Strnad wasn't meant to be entirely serious, still…is, is Strnad even still alive?

You know, just after your letter came in, the Comics Buyer's Guide *(I believe it was) had a big article on a revamp of* Battlestar Galactica *or* Magnus, Robot Fighter *or some such thing, and Jan Strnad was co-writing it. Nice colour photo of him and everything. I really should've made a better effort to remember what it was, since I knew I was going to answer your letter. But, anyway, yes. Jan Strnad is still alive*

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Re: Mama's Boy, part 5

Dave,

Bravo! Any disagreements you think I had with you (and they were fewer than you thought, at least after I re-read the earlier columns) were rendered trivial with the wrap-up.

This was an intensely personal column between you and your mother, and as an outsider, I wouldn't deign to criticize it in the manner I did part 1. But Dave, though you perceive your comic book-intensive youth as unique, you could have been writing about my brother and myself. Not exactly in all the details, but in the ways that count. "I certainly never had anything to contribute to the discussion at school when friends would talk about what assholes their parents were." I've been trying to tell my parents that since adulthood (I'm a decrepit old 37 these days). My mother also balanced career and motherhood by working in the school system, as had her mother before her. I hope you don't mind my lifting part 5 as a homemade anniversary card to my folks this month (with full credit, of course).

I never thought in the terms to ask my own mother what battles she couldn't decide whether to win or lose, but comic books would definitely have been among them. The

only difference between my childhood and yours in that respect is that I didn't *realize* that comic books were all I was interested in. When the published comics of the time stopped being as satisfying as I wished, I was determined to draw my own. I could draw characters in masks pretty well in high school, but I had to train myself to draw ones with exposed faces like Superman. I had trouble writing whole stories from scratch, but I could write better endings for existing stories than the real ones. That's what drove me to try my own comics pages.

I would have loved to re-write the ending of *Return of the Jedi*, but a single person can't produce his own version of a special-effects-laden movie. He can write his own comic books though. And I realize twenty years later that part of the appeal of the comic-book medium is the "I can do that" aspect of it. The new techno-innovations in coloring and graphics leave me cold, because they are more like movies (dependent on expensive technology) than comics (I can do it with a pen and paper myself). Thanks to Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, I finally realize that it was not the superheroics of even the Marvel Universe that I had loved as a teenager, but the comics medium.

But I was talking about "Mama's Boy." If you remember, in part 3, you inferred that I had stopped listening to what you were saying. Well, maybe I didn't get it the first time, but after subsequent readings, I'm pretty sure I at least see the gist of what you intended. I even see that you had expressed it more clearly in part 1 than I had implied. It usually does take a few readings.

You've stated that the rise of female-dominated society was a natural repercussion of a failing of men. Was that failing in some sense a failure to "decide which battles to win and which to lose"? It seems to me that that is the ultimate failing of any extremist group which inspires a backlash. They have to win always, at all costs, until the obsession with winning overrides common sense. Isn't this the failing of religious fundamentalists? "America — love it or leave it" folk? Radical feminists? Like any good story, it explains a lot.

I just got pulled over for speeding (only the second time in my 20 years of driving). After receiving the (duly earned) speeding ticket rather than a warning or a pass, my first thought was along the lines of "That #$@&&! cop should have cut me a break! Can't he see my near-spotless record? Shouldn't he be after truly dangerous drivers rather than someone driving a mere 45 mph on an open road all by himself? Grumble, grumble, grumble." That lasted a few seconds. Then I thought about the gap between my perception of myself (wonderful driver) and my real self (pretty good driver, but I was actually speeding, after all). I thought about taking it like a driver caught speeding and getting no less and no more than he deserves, not like "mother's little prince just got a footprint on his coronation robe." I'm still not happy about it, but, hey, I know my place.

Thanks, Dave. Really.

Larry Hart
1834 Cedar Court
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Thank you, Larry. As I told you in a personal letter, no hard feelings at all.

To answer your question, the failure of men (to me) has much in common with Canada's problem with Quebec: an inability (or, more exactly) an unwillingness *to recognize a "bad marriage" for what it is and to "get out," and to trust in God that whatever financial and political consequences result, they are going to be easier to deal with in the long term than trying to bribe the "bad marriage" partner. To me, Canada is making the fundamental mistake (metaphorically speaking) that if you buy "her" a new car and a new house, you can make a "bad marriage" into a "good marriage." "She" will stick around (as Quebec is doing), but I would scarcely call a marriage based on bribery a "good marriage."*

I think we see a lot of it these days.

The "success" of feminism seems to me to have resulted from the misguided notion that capitulation by men to women is sensible either tactically or strategically, that is, if, as men, we give in to all of her demands, she will eventually run out of demands, and peace will result. I don't see women running out of demands, do you? I mean, both on a societal and a personal level. Just the opposite.

*Perhaps along the same lines, I happened to be home from the studio around 5 p.m. (*very *unusual) and caught the White House signing ceremony for the Mideast Interim Peace Agreement and speeches. Arafat's was in Arabic, but (I swear I'm not making this up) the English translation referred at* least *(at* least*) three times to "workng towards a Final Solution." I would assume that Benjamin Netanyahu was listening to the same translation, and I have to give him credit. Not a wince, not a twitch, not an eye tick, just the same poker face as usual.*

Oops. Being a little too.. thorough... again. Write again soon, Lar. Love to hear from you.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave,

"Goddamnit," I thought to myself, "this has got to be the most stupid fucking silly thing I have ever seen in my life." I was at my cousin's wedding when the D.J. started playing "Macarena." *All* of the bride's female family members came out and started doing it. This was the first time I'd ever heard the song (I don't listen to the radio) and definitely the first time I'd ever seen the dance. I always prided myself on not having ever had any formal intro to this nonsense, and now I was being forced to witness this travesty at my cousin's wedding. "What the fuck type of family is he getting himself *involved* with?"

So much for that…

I have been a faithful, avid reader of Cerebus since issue 79. It was the damnedest comic I'd laid my eyes on. This well-drawn, black-and-white comic with a large, talking African mammal with a stuffed-up nose, some guy named "Bear" who shouts "Yo!" and some midget geezer commenting on the end of the world. What kinda comic book is this?!!! I bought it initially because of the artwork, and shortly I was hooked on the book. It opened a whole new world of comics and the possibilities that cartooning could represent. Although I didn't go down the route of

comic books, I (at the moment) do a heavy workload of book illustration.

Not that that really means a damn, but the thing is, I *know* you don't sell artwork anymore, but I like practically each and every page in issue 79. The book has a special value to me, because (to me) it opened up a whole other world in illustration and cartooning. Please let me know if you would be willing to sell me a page or two from that issue.

Second item is that in January I will be moving to Japan for at least a year, and probably will live there for a longer period of time. That means coming across *Cerebus* on a monthly basis will be the equivalent of a snipe hunt. What are your subscription rates for both international and for the U.S.? I don't want to wait until the "phone books" come out, because I like the comic, I like the covers, I like the design and effort that go into each issue. You can't get the same feel from the "phone books." Besides, it would ruin the sheer volume I have of 200+ separate issues I get to dig through every now and then for all-night *Cerebus* readings when I'm in a slow period of work. So, if you could *please* get back to me on these couple of items before January, which is when I leave, I would be very grateful.

Best,

Jeff White
60 Thorndike St.
Arlington, MA 02174

I know, I know. I have the same reaction to line-dancing. I mean, not that women *are into it — women are, you know, women. Everybody doing the same thing at the same time to music is, you know, really cool (for some reason). But I really have to wonder about the guys (make that "guys"). What is up with THAT?*

Hey, that's right. Last letters column of the 1900s. Okay, here's the deal with artwork, folks. You can request any page you want and make an offer on it. Letter, postcard, or fax. If we have the page (or cover) and we accept your offer, we'll contact you. Send a certified cheque or money order, and we'll send you the page (or cover). Now. Here's where everyone is apt to take offense, which is why I have postponed answering this until the last letters column of the 1900s:

We don't do counteroffers. Truth be told, we're just as happy keeping the artwork. If we don't *accept your offer, you'll get your letter, postcard, or fax back with the pages (or covers) circled that we have, so if you're making an offer on a bunch of stuff, make 'em all separate, okay? I.e., no* "Cerebus #79 pages 3-20 (any page").

Each page (or cover) has to be listed separately with a separate offer. And when I say that we don't do counter-offers, that includes "ballpark figures," "Am I hot or am I cold?" or anything of a like quality. Please don't take offense, but I am serious when I say that Ger and I are just as happy hanging onto the artwork as selling it. And in the interests of keeping this as easy as possible (for us), you will only hear back if your offer is accepted, okay? Okaaay? C'mon, there's no need to sulk. Okaaaay? Attaboy (or girl, as the case may be). All letters, postcards, or faxes containing the phrase (or variations thereof) "I know you said that you don't make counteroffers, but..." will be ripped into a million pieces and burned to hard, dry ash (metaphorically speaking).

And that's the story on selling the artwork, kids.

❄❄❄❄❄❄❄❄❄

Dear Dave,

I've been reading Robert Graves' *The White Goddess,* and your footprints are all over it. I'd list all the references to it in *Flight* and *Women* (and possibly in *Reads*), but, really, it's a bloody chore — and you know where they are. What I want to know is how you would describe your attitude to Graves and his work. *(I admire the hell out of his "Claudius" series — one of my foremost thoughts as I take my leave of these monthly... press conferences... for want of a better term...mirrors Claudius' own when he realizes the Republic is never going to be restored, and all the Gods and Goddesses bullshit just has to consume Rome and what Rome might have been: "Let* ALL *the POISON lurking in the MUD... HATCH OUT!!" Derek Jacobi got full value out of that one in the TV adaptation, I thought.)* Presumably you're aware of his influence on Mailer, but you mention Mailer in writing while Graves' name is absent. Why discuss the one and not the other? *(Apart from the "Claudius" series, I don't find anything interesting about Graves.)* And did you find *The White Goddess* as inspiring as I do? *(Um. No. No. Frankly, it gave me the creeps. For years I kept a copy of it next to the drawing board to remind me of exactly how much it gave me the creeps. It was like... like... that part in the TV movie "The Legend of Lizzie Borden" that I saw when I was about fifteen, when "Dr.Borden" tries to give "Lizzie" a little "hands-on" experience with cadavers as a way of getting her to see how "beautiful" death is. One of those double layers of the creeps where I can't figure out which is creepier — Graves' White Goddess or the glittery-eyed love he evinces for her on every page of the book. The latter, I guess.)* I can hardly read a page of it without having ideas that demand I put it down and write. Also, have you read the essay "Intimations of the Black Goddess"? You're welcome to a photocopy. *(Uh. Um. No... uh... thanks. Thanks, but... uh... no.)* I keep thinking of Jaka as Cerebus' Black Goddess — Astoria fairly clearly being his White, hair colour notwithstanding. The temptation is very strong to consider Graves as a, perhaps *the* key to unlocking the meaning of "Cerebus." Am I just reading my enthusiasms into your work? I suppose I'm ultimately asking for a dissertation: "Graves. By Sim." I'm not going to get it, am I? *(No. No, you're not. Sorry about that.)*

Last time I wrote to you it was to bang on about my enduring virginity. You chose to publish my letter and asked me in your reply what I wanted. Now that I have your attention again, it seems only polite to answer you — but I'm not going to (sorry), though please believe me when I say I do now know. I guess I had enough of discussing my sex life in public last time. Fool me once...etc. I'll tell a harmless anecdote instead — far too dull to elicit publication.

That last letter was headed with a London address belonging to an East End boozer called the Brittannia, above which I then lived. Any Bethnal Green Bangladeshi can tell you the significance of that name: Brittannia. Patriotism. Steel toecaps. And so on. I could send you wigged-out articles ("Nazi Occultists Seize Omphalos"!) about the neo-Nazis who were elected in the area while I was there. Most of their supporters hung (if only!) in the pub; the rest of its clientele hadn't mastered the ballot-paper. But the point is that around about then I was gobbling *From Hell* like a junkie with a drug-hungry tapeworm, and I was tickled raw to discover that Annie Chapman *et al* had pickled their livers in an East End boozer called the Brittannia. Crikey, I thought, it's *The Twilight Zone*. But with its usual flavour of iconoclastic mundanity, reality soon turned up another…and another, and probably many more East End Brittannias. And of course I'd got one of the ones without the synchronicity.

Told you it was dull.

Tata f'now.

Ian Beggs
4 Springfield Road
Brighton
England

Interesting anecdote. I spent a week in Soho this fall, and my host and hostess who let me have their flat for the week (the urge to name-drop is making my molars ache) had a book on the history of Soho, so I checked out most of the locations, including the house where Mozart and his family stayed when he was presented at court at the agé of nine, the hovel where Karl Marx et famille *lived when he was thrown off the continent, etc. etc. One location was a pub where William Blake and his cronies hung out, which was a center of "the druidic revival" (the book said). So I went in for a pint. Well, I got my pint and was checking out the really, really grim decor when I noticed that all of the clientele were blokes. Simultaneous with my realization, two of the blokes kissed each other. I have never drained a pint and beat so hasty a retreat in my life. "Well," I thought, as I walked briskly up the sidewalk, "looks like the 'druidic revival' is coming along nicely."*

Oh, give it UP, androgynes. My opinion on homosexuality is unchanged: As long as they don't do it in the street and scare the horses.

❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁

Hello, Dave.

Been a while. You printed a letter from me in issue #184 (Mothers & Daughters 34 "Something moved…"). Belatedly, thank you; it was and is appreciated. Now, to the substance of this missive.

I had, although I continued to *buy* them, stopped *reading* the new issues as they came out. The reason for this is complicated, mostly involving the end to my substance abuse and a short excursion into the realm of delusional paranoia. Basically (without going into true confessions), I was interested enough to keep buying the issues, but disinterested in actually reading them.

Well, about 18 months (issues #217-235) have lapsed, and I figured I'd give it a go again, being that my (mostly self-imposed) mental/emotional/spiritual crisis was being taken care of with satisfactory results. I started over at issue #200, a good enough starting point, really, since even though I was reading monthly at the time, I really don't remember much of substance from May of '93 until June of '96.

I'm getting to it, trust me.

"They really do read better as a collection." I kinda figured this was true, since I didn't start reading until #180, after first reading the "phone books." So, anyway, the story, although seemingly in remission, seems to be moving at a realistic clip, if I understand the chronology correctly. I'm estimating that Cerebus spent between five and 10 years at the taverns, both Harrison Starkey's and his own. Also, reading the various text pages are always interesting, to say the least. I may not always agree with you (screw the Beatles and Stones; let's hear it for the Kinks and the Who!), but who am I to say you are wrong?

Based on my own experiences, I'd like to thank you for realistically depicting someone drinking themselves into oblivion because of — and being driven insane by — having what they perceive as everything being taken away. Similar thing happened to me, and thank God it didn't take me that long to snap out of it, although it did seem like an eternity. And like Cerebus, I took care of it (initially) on my own. I took my own first step. Self-reliance. It wouldn't have gotten done right otherwise. Since then, I've relied more on the help and support of my family (whom I never really appreciated before) and the few friends who stuck by me. What also helped was a rediscovery of my spirituality (very different, I think you'll agree, from religion) and a newfound sense of purpose. That purpose is simply to live my life. I've really taken some of the things you've said in Aardvark Comment to heart, especially concerning faith or Faith, your happiness vs. gratification position, and your essays on Mama's Boys.

Basically, my goals are simple. Get back into school and study what interests me. Keep on working at the record shop I work at, even though I barely scrape above minimum wage. Keep my nose clean. Play my bass. Read *Cerebus*. And you know, a girlfriend might be nice, but it's been so long, I don't even really miss it anymore. (Who the hell am I kidding — *of course* I miss it!)

Hopefully I'll get to meet you someday and thank you personally, but if not, we'll both live, won't we? That's right.

D. T. Gillespie

P.S. Hey, if you print this, anyone who's interested in a pen pal can e-mail me at *soulpatch99@hotmail.com* Gimme a buzz.

Well, glad to hear that my rantings and ravings here in the back of the book (one more to go, Dave. One more letter. C'mon, big fella, you can do it) were of some use to you, old man.

All you nice folks who are into those typewriter-with-a-television-on-top, give D.T. a buzz or a beep or a doop-doop-doop or a sprazz or whatever it is those things do.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave,

I just read *Cerebus* #235 and a few questions came to mind regarding the upcoming final issues.

Do you have any plans about possibly putting *Cerebus* on a CD-ROM? I know you would need to receive the monies from the final "phone book," of course. But, by the year 2006, I would imagine the sales would dribble to nothing. *(Well, you silver-tongued, cybernetic sweetheart. You sure know how to turn an author's head with flattery. You surely, surely do.)* By then could you please consider a CD-ROM for those of us who would like a more permanent record of the series?

A CD-ROM would take up less space and also outlive the paperback "phone books." *(Not to mention making fresh cappuccino with or without cinnamon and thousands of julienne fries this fast and easy way.)*

It could also include several nice extras, including color reproductions of all 300 covers (also all the front and back covers of the "phone books"), a tour of the studio and maybe an interview with you and Gerhard. *(Oh, heck. Why stop there? I could just slip a CD-ROMCAM on top of both of our heads, and we could put 24 hours of "A Day in the Life of Dave and Ger" on there too. Oh, wait. There are two of us, so make that 48 hours, unless you want to cut out the sleeping part, which would probably take us down to a clean 32 hours — depending on the day.)*

Also, seeing as how any final letters about issue #300 would not be in issues #304 or 305…could you also consider a final Aardvark Comment issue which would print all the final letters from the fans and maybe some final thoughts from you? *(I think this sounds like another job for CD-ROMCAM. Five tightly edited hours of Ger and me facing each other, cackling like fiends, and going, "DONE! DONE!!! WE'RE ACTUALLY DONE!! HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!" and throwing Aardvark Comment letters up in the air and spraying each other with champagne.)*

I know there are several years left to go, but I was wondering if anyone else had suggested these things, and, if not, well, here they are. Please think about it, okay?

(Okay.)

From one of the 20,000 or so fans (out of five billion or so who are really missing out)…

Frank Zubek

Sorry, Frank, old sport. I... I got a little giddy there, didn't I?

Sorry to make light of your CD-ROM idea. Maybe it's a good one. I really don't know. At the moment...at the moment, what, Dave? C'mon, big guy, you're almost there. At the moment, I think it's more likely that we would issue the collections in hardcover when we're done. White paper, stitched binding, the whole nine yards. Maybe even shoot for getting Church & State *and* Mothers & Daughters *into single volumes — which just isn't possible in the trade paperback format.*

It's kind of a bad time to ask, really, since we just had to get four or five of the books back in print (depending on whether you include this year's rookie volume, Rick's Story, *which we sort of had to print anyway). That's really more than enough of a full plate, with five years to go (actually, as I type this, four years, eleven months, and sixteen and a half pages, but — har har — who's counting?). The idea that we really, actually might be done one day just hasn't taken hold with Ger and me, like, at ALL. I mean, five years from now, CD-ROM might be one of those joke things, like eight-track tapes and CB radios. I'm sure there will be more than enough snake-oil salesmen — I'm sorry, for some reason my spellchecker thought "experts on cutting-edge technology" was spelled that way — to introduce us to the best and most modern way to take* Cerebus *into all of the Brave New World environs flowing with milk and honey and where the streets really are paved with gold and no one ever goes to bed hungry and...*

This would seem to call for one of the few jokes I ever wrote, Frank:

"As Teddy Kennedy would say, 'We'll drive off that bridge when we come to it.'"

Oh, man. I just checked to see how far away the bottom of the page is.

I'm not even close.

Even making each sentence a new paragraph...

...even using ellipses to break up the sentences...

...this is going to take forever.

I'll go out back for a smoke break.

That's what I do now. One cigarette an hour during the work day. All you artist-smokers should consider giving it a try. Find that the workday just seems to vanish out from under you? Limit yourself to one cigarette an hour, and, baby, just watch that clock slow to a craaaawl.

Be right back

(Twenty more lines to go. Smoke break. See if I can come up with something.)

Okay, I'm back.

I'm really going to miss this, you guys. (Seventeen.)

*Remember, it's not as if I'm...gone...or anything. I do read every letter that comes in. Honest injun (*politically incorrect, suggest substituting... *ah, forget it. Fourteen lines to go and then the point is moot). That's not something that I would lie about. I especially like the long, meandering ones where the person really just needs to get something off his or her chest. I really do. The more so now because I don't have to figure out if I should or shouldn't print it. I can just enjoy it for its own sake with the dregs of my rapidly cooling decaf when Ger shows up with the mail. (Six.)*

And I do answer a percentage of the mail, depending on whether I have something to say or not. (Four.)

Anyway, I hope some of you enjoy the Notes section starting in the next issue. I'm looking forward to it, so that's a good thing. Okay, last one out, please turn out the lights and lock the doors.

'Bye for now.